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October 30, 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR TOM JOHNSON

SUBJECT: CIA Review of the Johnson Papers

1. I thought it would be useful to recapitulate some of the points we agreed on this morning in discussing the "test case" approach to declassification, and to summarize some of my impressions after a survey of the files here.
2. Speaking generally, it seems to me that the substance of a good deal of the material on foreign policy developments during the Johnson Administration can be put into published form without damage to the national security. This assumes that the classified information would, as you have indicated, be "sanitized" in such a way as to protect sources, personal sensibilities, and current diplomatic relations; and that it would be double checked on security grounds by such qualified persons as Professor Rostow and Mr. Jorden.
3. Accelerated declassification of the actual department and agency documents is of course a far more difficult and complex question. I have looked through enough of the files here -- about 30 per cent of the total -- to get a good grasp of the nature and extent of the material involved. It is probably true that in many cases these documents were classified for reasons which were good and sufficient at the time but which may no longer be valid.
4. Nonetheless, the deeper I have delved the more impressed I have become with the problems which public disclosure in the next few years would pose. The stickiest problems, in my judgment, arise from the fact that a large part of the cable traffic and memoranda sent to the White House has to do with sensitive and usually unacknowledged dealings between key political and military leaders of the U.S. and foreign governments. This is espe-

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It is hard to conceive that such records could be opened

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to public view without jeopardizing our current relationships and inhibiting future cooperation with foreign officials on a confidential basis.

5. If all such offending documents were withheld while others were released, it would leave a record which might not be satisfactory from any viewpoint -- that of the researcher, of President Johnson, of foreign governments, of our own government, or of history. As we have all noted, an incomplete and possibly misleading record could be more unhelpful than helpful.

6. I emphasize that these are general impressions only, based on a general survey of the papers. Since the overwhelming majority of documents involved originated with the NSC staff and the State Department, I will leave 25X1 firm judgments to your own and the Department's specialists.

a. In reviewing the documents on the DR for possible declassification earlier than usual, the departmental experts will apply the same security criteria or standards used in releasing government papers for the Foreign Relations series after the normal 25-year period (only the timing of release will be reconsidered);

b. Release of CIA and FBI documents is not envisioned. (This is covered by point "a" in fact, since under the Historical Office's standard procedure, intelligence and investigatory information is automatically excluded from declassification at the 25-year stage; such material is held for review 75 years after date of issue.)

8. In the light of these agreed guidelines, it seems to me and my colleagues that little would be gained by detailing a CIA specialist to participate on a day-by-day basis in the test review being undertaken by State and Defense. General Schulz agrees.

9. Moreover, I have already taken a good look at all the DR material on hand here, particularly our own. All of the Agency documents -- raw agent reports, daily intelligence publications, Intelligence Memoranda ("hard-cover" published products and less formal spot analyses), National Estimates, covert action plans -- would appear to fall into the exempted category. (Incidentally,

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if a question is raised about another type of Agency product, the daily or hourly Situation Reports, I would suggest that they be set aside on grounds that they merely summarize source material that will come under review individually. They quote liberally from significant ambassadorial and attache reports and thus would have to be cleared by State and Defense. They contain many references to station and embassy informants; and they cover the same ground as the DR Task Force daily sitreps.)

10. Whether we are on the scene or not, we stand ready to provide whatever aid you or the State/Defense team may need during the course of the test study. Any questions that might come up probably can be handled, either through me or directly by our DR experts, most efficiently via your Washington telephone line.

11. Until some conclusion emerges from the DR case study, further canvassing of the Situation Room files seems to have little immediate purpose. The several hundred folders on varied subjects I have screened in the last several weeks have given me already a good picture of the kinds of material you hold. Once the test has been conducted, we should have a better basis for charting the next moves.



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It is agreed that accelerated declassification raises issues of declassification policy that can only be settled by President Nixon.

To formulate the issues involved President Johnson has suggested that we proceed on a test case as follows:

1. Start with a subject or subjects chosen by President Johnson.
2. Arrange for Departmental officials familiar with declassification on the chosen subject or subjects to come to Austin to examine the papers in Austin bearing on that subject.
3. After completion of examination of papers in Austin, President Johnson will decide whether or not to subject the departmental copies of documents to examination in Washington with a view to possible declassification.

President Johnson believes that after this procedure has been completed we then will be in a position to more clearly ascertain the material that might be declassified and determine what departmental assistance may be required in Washington.

It is President Johnson's hope that the directives by H. R. Haldeman of October 7, 1969 and January 24, 1969 will provide the appropriate department heads with authority to send suitable officials in Austin to undertake the above action in an expeditious manner.